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May 17, 2006

MINORITY

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Dear Colleague:

I would like to bring to your attention a recent letter from the National Council of La Raza, the nation's largest Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization, in support of my legislation, H.R. 4140, the "Ensuring Ballot Access for Hurricanes Katrina and Rita Victims Act of 2005".

H.R. 4140 would authorize the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) to provide up to \$50 million in grants to the states affected by hurricanes Katrina and Rita. These grants are not a blank check. States would have to submit detailed plans to EAC in order to: receive funding to re-establish voter registration lists; reconstruct destroyed polling stations; make polling places fully accessible to those with disabilities; and restore and replace supplies, materials, and equipment used in the administration of elections which were damaged as a result of these devastating storms.

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita displaced nearly 700,000 citizens from the Gulf Coast Region last year. Louisiana alone has indicated that nearly 400,000 registered voters are scattered across 49 states. Nearly 250,000 Latinos were affected by these storms.

The Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi Secretaries of State have all indicated that additional funding is needed to ensure that the states and localities affected by these storms have the necessary infrastructure in place to conduct federal elections. As their primary elections are scheduled for June and September, we need to act swiftly to safeguard the votes of Katrina and Rita survivors.

Equal access to transparent elections is not an issue of race; Hurricanes Katrina and Rita did not discriminate in the lives they affected. Americans of all races were hit hard by these storms and Congress must make certain that the affected states receive the necessary funding to provide such elections for the American people.

If you have any questions or would like to become a cosponsor of H.R. 4140, please contact me or my elections counsel, Thomas Hicks, at 225-2061.

All the best,



Juanita Millender-McDonald
Ranking Member



Janet Murguía, President

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May 1, 2006

The Honorable Juanita Millender-McDonald
Ranking Member
House Administration Committee
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman Millender-McDonald:

On behalf of the National Council of La Raza (NCLR) – the largest national Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization in the United States – I write to express my support for H.R. 4140, the “Ensuring Ballot Access for Hurricanes Katrina and Rita Victims Act of 2005.”

It is estimated that nearly a quarter of a million Latinos in the Gulf region were affected by Hurricane Katrina; many others were victims of Hurricane Rita. As the survivors struggle to rebuild their lives and reintegrate into civic life, the federal government must remove unnecessary barriers and secure the voting rights of all hurricane victims. H.R. 4140 restores the right to vote for all voters in the Gulf region by providing much-needed assistance in the form of grants to states affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita to replace voting supplies and equipment. Furthermore, the measure would address the needs of Latino voters that are limited-English-proficient and face additional barriers if voting systems are not reestablished. While rebuilding the region will take several years, states must have the resources now to ensure the integrity of voter databases and records, which are vital to encouraging full and fair elections.

Thank you for sponsoring this important legislation. The right to vote is a fundamental civil right for all Americans, and NCLR supports efforts, such as H.R. 4140, to remove barriers that inhibit hurricane victims from exercising this right. Please do not hesitate to contact me at (202) 776-1734 if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Janet Murguía
President and CEO

Regional Offices: Atlanta, Georgia • Chicago, Illinois • Los Angeles, California • New York, New York
Phoenix, Arizona • Sacramento, California • San Antonio, Texas • San Juan, Puerto Rico

LA RAZA: The Hispanic People of the New World